

Ilhan Omar's support of BDS isn't anti-Semitic. It's just common sense

written by Lev Koufax
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Israeli army bulldozer demolishes a building in occupied East Jerusalem on July 22.

On July 17, progressive Minnesota Congressperson Ilhan Omar [introduced a resolution](#) in the House of Representatives defending people's right to boycott. Omar's resolution was in response to a proposed vote on the floor of the House to officially condemn the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement, known as BDS.

The BDS movement's goal is to increase economic and social pressure against the racist state of Israel, which continues to perpetrate violent attacks against the occupied Palestinian people.

The House [voted 398 to 17 to condemn](#) the BDS movement on July 23 — just a day after the Israeli military began demolishing Palestinian homes near the “separation wall” as alleged security risks.

Congressperson Omar's resolution represents a heroic effort to defend the movement to end Israeli apartheid and all U.S. support for it. Unfortunately, Omar has come under another wave of right-wing attacks because of it.

New York Congressperson Lee Zeldin wrote an [op-ed for the Fox News website](#) attacking Omar. Zeldin's piece epitomizes the war being waged on Omar and her progressive allies, including Palestinian American Rep. Rashida Tlaib of Michigan.

In his op-ed, Zeldin accused Omar of anti-Semitism; further, Zeldin implied that Omar supported violent attacks on the Jewish community.

Nothing could be further from the truth. Zeldin's op-ed and the corresponding war of words coming from the political right is representative of an age-old cycle in the debate around Israel.

For the past several decades, every time public figures or organizations criticize Israeli policy, they are lambasted by Zionists (Jews and Christians alike) as being anti-Semites. These attacks are particularly vicious when the critic of Israel is Arab

and/or Muslim.

It is time for the entire country, and particularly the Jewish community, to be very clear on something: anti-Zionism is not the same as anti-Semitism. Zionism is a political ideology that has served the goals of U.S. bosses for a long time by supplanting the Palestinian people and helping to tighten the grip of Western imperialism on the Middle East.

Simply because a public figure or organization criticizes Israel's racist policies does not mean the criticisms are veiled anti-Semitism. Such accusations are tools of the right wing to silence any dissent against Israel's genocidal efforts against the Palestinian communities in the West Bank and Gaza.

It's no different in the case of Congressperson Omar. The attacks upon her are high in pitch because the racist supporters of Israel understand the threat she and the progressive movement behind her pose to the occupation.

The U.S. and its satellite state of Israel have proven they will do anything to crush an attempt to restrict their military activities in the Middle East. This is exactly why members of the U.S. Congress, [Republican and Democrat alike](#), are uniting to attack Omar and the BDS movement.

Anti-Semitism is a plague. It's a brutal prejudice that has tormented innocent Jewish people and divided the working class for centuries. Anti-Zionism, on the other hand, is a political movement and human rights cause of the utmost importance.

Right now, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians are intentionally being deprived access to basic human needs: food, water, shelter, education, jobs — the list goes on.

The voices raised against these atrocities must be booming and impassioned. This is exactly the type of voice that Ilhan Omar has given the BDS movement.

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